

Secretary Vance

Afghanistan: America's Course

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Following is an address by Secretary of State Cyrus Vance before the Chicago Council on Foreign Relations, Chicago, Illinois, March 3, 1980.

The Chicago Council on Foreign Relations has a proud tradition as a forum where major world issues can be explored and discussed. For nearly 60 years, this organization has been a center of thought, education, and reasoned debate on America's course in the world.

I want to speak with you today about that course. For as much as at any time in recent years, it is essential that our people be clear about our nation's goals and about the actions we are prepared to take in their pursuit.

As long as Americans remain in captivity in Iran, their safe release is uppermost in all our minds. The situation is now at a delicate and difficult stage. It would not be proper for me to comment on that situation in detail today.

Let me simply say that our objective is to bring the present crisis to an early end. We expect the work of the U.N. commission of inquiry to contribute to that objective. Our hostages must be released and safely returned to the United States. At the same time, we hope for an independent and secure Iran and have no desire to interfere in its internal affairs.

Today, I want to speak with you about another serious challenge we face: Soviet aggression against Afghanistan and the actions we have taken in response. Specifically, I want to discuss the purposes that underlie our actions and how they relate to the long-term goals of American foreign policy.

Let me begin by underscoring what is at stake.

Because of our commitment to the principles of national independence, territorial integrity, and human rights, we cannot turn our backs when national boundaries are violated, when the independence of another nation is destroyed, when the popular will is suppressed through brute military force.

What is at stake first in Afghanistan is the freedom of a nation and of a people.

We are concerned as well with the broader threat that Soviet actions pose to the region of southwest Asia and the Persian Gulf. We now depend upon this area of the world for roughly 25% of our annual imports of oil. Our allies and others—developing nations as well as industrial—are even more dependent on oil from this region. Approximately two-thirds of Western Europe's oil imports and three-fourths of Japan's come from the Persian Gulf. And we must remember that our own economic health is intimately tied to theirs.

Our stake in the region, however, goes beyond oil, beyond economics.

Peace and stability in the region are critical to the future of our friends there. The strength and skill we show in supporting their independence will demonstrate to them and to others the constancy of our purpose. This is important to the character of our alliances, to our ties to friendly nations in every region of the world, and to the future of our relations with the Soviet Union.

So it is entirely accurate to say that the vital interests of the United States—

in fact, of much of the world—are involved in this region. An attempt by any outside force to gain control of the Persian Gulf region would be an assault on these vital interests. As the President has said: It "... will be repelled by any means necessary, including military force."

Not even the most penetrating analysis can determine with certainty Soviet intentions in the region—whether their motives in Afghanistan are limited or part of a larger strategy. The fact is that tens of thousands of Soviet troops are in Afghanistan. The fact is that Soviet actions have created a potential threat to the security of nations in the region and to the world's free access to vital resources and shipping routes.

To respond firmly to the potential threat is not to be apocalyptic; it is simply to be prudent. In such a situation, our own people, our allies—and the leaders of the Soviet Union—must understand not only what the United States is doing in this crisis, but why.

A few days ago, I went to Europe at the President's request to consult with a number of our allies about the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. We discussed our common interests and our common responsibilities. I explained how America's actions support five key objectives. Today I want to outline them briefly for you and for the larger audience beyond this room.

U.S. Objectives

Our first purpose is to impose a heavy price for this aggression—because of our abhorrence of what is being done to the Afghan people and to help deter similar actions elsewhere. The Soviet leadership must understand that the international reaction to aggression will be swift and firm.

The steps we have taken—on grain, on technology, on the Olympics, on fisheries, and in other areas—convey our determination in the clearest terms. These measures do not stand alone. For the Soviets are facing staunch, broadly based Afghan resistance. And they have been condemned by the overwhelming majority of nations in the world.

The measures we have taken involve sacrifice—for our farmers and our businessmen, our athletes, our scientists—indeed, for all of us. But the American people are prepared to make sacrifices for the peace we cherish.

The steps we have taken are also designed to move us toward our second goal: the withdrawal of all Soviet military forces from Afghanistan.

Let me affirm today that the sanctions we have undertaken in response to the Soviet invasion will remain in force until all Soviet troops are withdrawn from Afghanistan. Let me be equally clear that when those actions cease—when Soviet troops are fully withdrawn from Afghanistan—our intention is to remove the sanctions we have imposed since the invasion of that nation.

To encourage that withdrawal, we are also ready, as the President has said, to support efforts by the international community to restore a neutral, nonaligned Afghan Government that would be responsive to the wishes of the Afghan people. With the prompt withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan, the United States would be willing to join with Afghanistan's neighbors in a guarantee of Afghanistan's true neutrality and of noninterference in its internal affairs. Such a political settlement would put an end to brutality and bloodshed in Afghanistan. It would threaten the interests of no nation; it would serve the interests of all.

But let me be frank. There are no signs at this time of a Soviet withdrawal. If anything, current signs point to the contrary: the Soviet buildup continues, and permanent facilities are being constructed.

This makes our third objective all the more important. While imposing penalties for aggression for as long as necessary, it is deeply in the interests of the United States and our allies to manage East-West relations in ways that preserve their essential framework.

Our relations with the Soviet Union have been and will be essentially competitive. Our fundamental values differ. Our interests frequently diverge. We will promote our interests and our values, and we will oppose aggression. But our competition must be bounded by restraint and by sensitivity to each other's vital interests. For such a relationship between the two superpowers is central to peace.

We seek no return of the cold war, of the indiscriminate confrontation of earlier times.

We will continue to pursue our national interests in balanced and verifiable arms control agreements—in the SALT process, on conventional and theater nuclear forces in Europe, on banning tests of nuclear weapons, and in other areas. Specifically, the offer to negotiate an agreement on limiting theater nuclear forces in Europe remains on the table. The Soviet Union should pursue it with us.

Our nation has benefited from the arms control agreements we have

achieved. In 1963, we halted poisonous nuclear weapons tests in the atmosphere. The SALT I Interim Agreement froze the number of offensive strategic missiles when the Soviets were building up in this area and we were not. The Antiballistic Missile Treaty headed off a potentially costly and destabilizing arms race in these defensive weapons.

The SALT II Treaty we have negotiated also serves America's security interests. It would restrain Soviet strategic programs through 1985. It would limit the future threats we will face and thus make our own defense planning more certain. It would preserve our ability to monitor Soviet strategic developments. And it would permit our own modernization efforts to proceed.

SALT II is not a carrot. It is not a stick. It stands on its own merits as an integral part of our national security policy. It is especially important during a time of increased tension between the two superpowers.

We remain deeply committed to ratification of the treaty. It is not in our interest to forego its security advantages. Nor is it in our interest, during a period of heightened tensions, to dismantle the framework of East-West relations that has been built over more than two decades.

To help preserve this framework, and because we adhere to international law, we are not abrogating formal agreements with the Soviet Union.

We are pursuing preparations for the next review Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, to be held this year in Madrid. We will continue our policy of building stronger relations with the nations of Eastern Europe. And we remain prepared to build a more stable relationship with the Soviet Union when circumstances permit.

Our fourth objective is to work with the nations of southwest Asia and with others to strengthen the security, stability, and independence of the region.

We firmly believe that the nations of the region should control their own destinies. Most emphatically, we believe that the resources of the region belong to its nations and peoples. Their independence poses no threat to us. The threat would lie in the loss of their independence.

We are strengthening our ability to respond swiftly and effectively if our vital interests are assaulted. We have increased our naval presence in the Indian Ocean. We have held positive discussions with nations in the area on U.S. access to air and naval facilities.

Our own military preparedness, however, is only one element of our strat-

egy in the region. Creating a framework for security cooperation in the region must, of its essence, be a cooperative undertaking.

This means that we will work with the nations of the region to help strengthen their ability to defend their independence and enhance their political and economic stability. It means that we will continue to work with others toward peaceful resolutions of the tensions between nations in the region—most importantly, between Israel and her Arab neighbors. And it means that we will work to improve our relations with nations throughout the area, wherever there is a basis of shared interests. The United States welcomes the growing vitality of the Islamic world and sees in it a creative contribution to a world based on diversity and self-reliance.

Our fifth goal must be to draw from these events a renewed commitment to building the basic military and economic strength of America.

Our nation has initiated the most comprehensive modernization of our defense forces in over a decade. We will proceed expeditiously with the programs underway—to modernize each leg of our strategic forces, to implement NATO's decision last December on our theater nuclear weapons in Europe, and to upgrade our conventional forces.

Afghanistan brings the importance of those long-term defense investments into sharp focus, and it gives new focus to the need to increase our military mobility.

These programs will require increased defense budgets this year and for the foreseeable future. We must be clear in our determination to meet the requirements of safety and security for our nation and our allies.

Events in southwest Asia must also strengthen our determination to forestall a future energy disaster. For, quite simply, that is what we could face.

We should need no reminder of the costs and risks of our energy dependence. It fuels our inflation. It strains the dollar. It drains our balance of payments. It increases our vulnerability.

The message is clear. Energy policy is central to our foreign policy. We cannot, over the long run, be independent, strong, and free and at the same time remain heavily dependent on foreign energy.

We have made some progress in the past few years. Our overall oil consumption was down in 1979. So was gasoline consumption. Under the President's leadership, we have taken important steps toward greater energy security. But, as the President has said, far more needs to be done. Gaining control over our energy

future is an essential part of a prudent response to recent events in southwest Asia.

National Interests

Each of these objectives—to gain the withdrawal of all Soviet forces from Afghanistan, to deter further Soviet aggression, to manage sensibly U.S.-Soviet relations in a period of heightened tensions, to help strengthen the nations in the region, and to build America's strength—each serves the interests not only of America but of all nations which have a stake in world peace and stability. And they involve the efforts of others as well as ourselves.

As we move ahead together, our allies need to know that the United States will remain strong. And we will.

They need to know that we are committed to the common defense. We are, and we will remain so.

They need to know, at the same time, that the United States, for its part, would welcome a more stable relationship with the Soviet Union. And we would.

We are not asking our allies to dismantle the framework of East-West relations. We do ask that they take measures designed to bring about the withdrawal of Soviet forces from Afghanistan and to deter the Soviets from new adventures that will produce new crises.

Detente cannot be divorced from deterrence. To oppose aggression now is to promote peace in the future—to foster the conditions for progress in East-West relations. To assume that we can obtain the benefits of detente while ignoring the need for deterrence would be short-sighted and dangerous. I am convinced that we will not do so.

As we work with other nations, we also seek the understanding and support of the American people behind the objectives I have described.

America's strength lies not only in our weapons and our laboratories, our factories, and our farms; it is rooted in the determination and good sense of our people when they are united in a common purpose. For the shape of our future depends on our will and our wisdom: the will to respond to aggression with renewed national strength and the wisdom to find, in our response to immediate crisis, a new national unity behind our foreign policy for the future.

That leads me to my final point.

The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan has had a definite impact on our foreign policy—on U.S.-Soviet relations and the common agenda with our allies. But it should not—it will not—turn us away

from the fundamental goals our nation has been pursuing in the world. They remain deeply in our national interest.

- It is in our national interest to lend America's full support to the negotiation of peaceful solutions to regional tensions.

Festering regional disputes fuel local arms races that drain resources from pressing human needs. They present opportunities for foreign intervention and exploitation. And they can erupt into open conflicts that bring the threat of wider wars. Precisely because the world has become a more dangerous place in recent months, we will continue to work to defuse its dangers.

- It is in our national interest to continue to strengthen our traditional alliances, to open new relationships—as we have with China—and to stay on course in building cooperative relations with the developing world.

The best way to thwart Soviet interference in the Third World is to pursue our own affirmative policy there, one that addresses the real interests we share in the freedom of developing nations—freedom from the dominance of outside powers, from the bitterness of racial injustice, from the waste of regional conflict, from the burdens of poverty.

That strategy does not mean that we should hide our differences with developing countries. But we can work together most effectively on issues of critical importance to us when they know we share their goals of political independence and economic justice.

This approach builds on our strengths, for it is most often to the West that these nations first turn for assistance in meeting their economic and security concerns. And this approach is working. There are serious trouble spots. But the fact is that our relations with most of the nations of Asia, Africa, and Latin America are stronger today than they have been in years.

- And finally, it is not only in our national character but deeply in our national interest to translate our dedication to freedom into practical support for human liberty in other nations.

Nations that respect the rights of their citizens, that are open to the expression and accommodation of conflicting views and interests, are in a stronger position to maintain their national balance and their national independence.

We are well aware that seething frustrations can explode into radicalism and violence which imperil America's interests. But it remains true that more often today, change is taking place peacefully, and it is leading toward human freedom.

It is in our interest to be part of that tide. And it is in our interest to defend human rights when they are threatened.

Indeed, a central issue raised for all the world by Soviet actions in Afghanistan is one of human rights: the right to determine one's own government; the right to religious liberty; the right to live in peace.

We will continue to strive not to impose our own institutions but to help others give expression in their own ways to the irrepressible human right to be free.

Ultimately, the purpose and the measure of our foreign policy are its impact on the lives of our people and others.

For over 200 years the United States has been on the side of freedom and progress. While we have known the world is a dangerous place, requiring our strength and our vigilance, we have also known that it need not be a hostile one. As the human condition is improved, as people

everywhere find better and more secure lives, the world becomes a safer place for America.

It is this belief that has marked the American character throughout the life of our Republic. It remains our faith today. ■

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